

Start Your Year with the ASCA National Model

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You work hard as a school counselor meeting students' needs. You put in countless hours so you can spend more time with your students while also juggling the many responsibilities of running a comprehensive school counseling program and being a team player at your school. Sometimes, it seems overwhelming. It doesn't have to be.

The newly revised ASCA National Model can help you organize your school counseling program, and your time, around what is most important for your students. It can also help you develop a school counseling program that enables you to spend more time with students and less time with the management activities and paperwork that are a necessary part of your job as a school counselor.

But the beginning of the school year is such a busy time helping students get started on the right foot, responding to parents and keeping up with requests from teachers and administrators. Who has time to focus on the school counseling program at such a busy time of year?

Believe it or not, you do.

Setting up your ASCA National Model school counseling program doesn't have to be an overwhelming and all-consuming process. With a little organization and planning, you can set up a comprehensive ASCA National Model-based program in the first three months of school using only about 16 hours. That's less than an hour and a half of your 40+ hours each week at school.

Start the year off right by using the templates from the ASCA National Model publication to set up your school counseling program. Don't worry about making them perfect. You can adjust any of them at any time as you implement your program.

School counseling program assessment: Begin with this self-assessment to gain a better understanding of how fully you are already implementing components of the ASCA National Model. The assessment is a simple checklist that will walk you through each component of a comprehensive school counseling program. You may also find the assessment helpful to use as a concise guide for developing each component of your school counseling program. Plan to spend 20-30 minutes completing the assessment.

School data profile: Gathering and understanding school data doesn't have to be a difficult or lengthy process. The school data profile template lets you organize your school's achievement, attendance and behavioral data in a format that helps you understand whether or not achievement gaps or issues of inequity exist at the school.

It's highly likely that someone at your school already collects the categories of data necessary for the school data profile. Share this template with an administrator or data manager at your school, and ask if a report can be generated to give you this information in a disaggregated format. You may also find these data on your school's report card produced by your state department of education.

Updating this template each year will also help you gain a better understanding of the progress made toward school counseling program goals over time. The accountability section of the ASCA National Model provides guidance and direction for analyzing the school data profile, and the profile can be an effective tool for evaluating your school counseling program at the end-of-year program evaluation and for goal setting for the following year.

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by: Eric Sparks, Ed.D.

Section: **Features**

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Haven't yet ordered your copy of "The Model: A Framework for School Counseling" (third edition)? There are numerous options for purchasing and reading the book:

Print: The new edition of the ASCA National Model is \$34.95 for members, \$44.95 for non-members. Order no: 289325. It comes with access to electronic templates for you to download for your own school counseling program. If you order the book online once you receive it. All books have a unique registration number. [Order online](#) 401-2404.

Digital: The ASCA National Model is available in a digital format to read on your computer or Kindle Fire. The price for the digital edition is the same as the print version. In addition to access to electronic templates, it also contains a variety of educational videos on various components of the ASCA National Model. Once you purchase the digital edition, you will automatically receive all future enhancements to the digital version. [Order online](#)

Once you have received the data, plan to spend less than an hour completing this template.

School counseling program goals: Developing program goals provides focus for the school counseling program and helps school counselors address specific student outcomes related to achievement, attendance and behavior. A well-written program goal is the first step to providing effective prevention and intervention activities that will improve student outcomes.

After completing the school data profile, it often becomes easy to identify areas of student need that are appropriate for school counseling program goals. Ask yourself, "What stands out as an issue from school data that the school counseling program can improve?" In addition, review your school improvement plan for schoolwide goals where the school counseling program can provide assistance.

The SMART goal format, an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time-bound, is included in the ASCA National Model as a tool for quickly writing effective goals. Using this format, you can develop one to three goals in 20-30 minutes.

ASCA Student Standards: These academic, career and personal/social standards enhance the learning process and define the knowledge, attitudes and skills students should be able to demonstrate as a result of the school counseling program. [Download](#) a copy of the ASCA Student Standards.

After understanding your students' needs through the school data profile, use the ASCA Student Standards program planning template to identify specific competencies and indicators that best address student needs and are appropriate for each grade range. These competencies and indicators will drive the implementation of classroom lessons and group activities.

You may also want to consider other student standards important to state and district initiatives. When appropriate, select competencies from these other student standards that complement and inform your comprehensive school counseling program. Plan to spend less than two hours completing the ASCA Student Standards program planning template.

Action plans: The ASCA National Model includes three types of action plans – curriculum, small-group and closing-the-gap. These action plans help school counselors efficiently and effectively implement important large-group, small-group and individual activities of a comprehensive program.

After reviewing school data and developing program goals, areas of focus for curriculum, small groups and closing-the-gap issues becomes more clear.

Develop one curriculum action plan to organize all of the main classroom and large-group activities you will implement throughout the year. Develop a separate small-group action plan for each small group you plan to implement. Develop a closing-the-gap action plan for each achievement, attendance or behavioral issue you plan to address for smaller groups of students.

Use the action plan templates to quickly and efficiently develop each of the three types of plans. Plan to spend less than three hours total developing all three of these plans.

Annual calendar: Developing a school counseling calendar helps you make sure your most important school counseling activities get scheduled throughout the year. It also informs students, parents, teachers and administrators of what, when and where school counseling activities will be held.

Organize your calendar in a month-by-month format. When creating your calendar, think through important events of your school counseling program that are expected to occur each year and place them on your calendar. In addition, think through activities related to your school counseling goals and action plans, as well as activities such as your advisory council meetings, and place those on your calendar when most appropriate.

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Combined: Want both print and digital? Purchase the print version first, and once you receive it, you will receive a promo code to purchase the digital version for only \$10. Do not order the digital version alone; you must order the print version first and then use the code you receive it to get this discounted price on the digital version.

You don't need to list everything you do on your calendar, but include those events you want your students, parents and administrators to know about. Plan to spend about an hour developing your school counseling program's annual calendar.

Beliefs, vision and mission: These topics continue to build the focus of the school counseling program. Belief statements describe school counselors' agreed-upon beliefs about the ability of all students to achieve. The vision statement describes the preferred future in terms of student achievement, attendance and/or behavior. The mission statement provides the focus and direction to reach the vision.

Beliefs must be identified first, and the ASCA National Model provides specific exercises that will help you develop belief statements. After you've identified beliefs, create a vision statement and mission statement. To be most effective in affecting student outcomes, the school counseling vision and mission statements align with the school's vision and mission statements.

To assist with the development of the vision and mission statements, specific criteria are included in the ASCA National Model. Using the exercises and criteria for beliefs, vision and mission, plan to spend three to six hours to develop all three components. If you have a school counseling team, plan to spend up to two hours discussing team members' beliefs before starting vision and mission statement development. Plan to spend two to four hours developing a vision statement and mission statement for the school counseling program that aligns with the school's vision and mission statements.

Annual agreement: This agreement outlines the organization and focus of the school counseling program and is made between each school counselor and the administrator in charge of the school counseling program each year. The ASCA National Model includes a template and suggested steps for completing the agreement, which includes meeting with the principal to finalize the agreement. Remember that the [Recognized ASCA Model Program \(RAMP\)](#) process requires the agreement to be signed within the first two months of school. Plan to spend less than two hours with this agreement – up to one hour creating your agreement and up to one hour discussing it with your administrator.

You work hard as a school counselor preparing the next generation of rocket scientists and brain surgeons. But setting up an ASCA National Model program is neither rocket science nor brain surgery. Get started today with the templates from the ASCA National Model to set up an outstanding comprehensive school counseling program.

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